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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Friday, September 1, 1933.

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How do you do, Everybody:

If letters are any sign of what's on your household calendars, canning conserving food for next winter is certainly the topic of the day. Mabel Stienbarger is fairly swamped with questions about time-tables for tomatoes, and peaches, and what not. And Mrs. Yeatman is doing her best to keep up with the letters on pickles and jellies. It seems that everybody's working to conserve food with something like the spirit of war time.

Some communities are going into food conservation in a big way. They are putting men and women to work in community canneries. The net result is employment for people who need jobs, and also thousands of cans of fruits and vegetables to use in relief work next winter. The cost per can of foods put up in this organized way is very small. The fresh fruits and vegetables come from community gardens, or many farmers are glad to donate surplus bushels that they can't sell. But sometimes when people with no experience in canning start right off on a large scale, they don't realize how you've got to watch every step. Canning is bacteriology applied. It is heating foods to kill the bacteria that make food spoil, and then sealing the cans airtight so no more bacteria, or other invisible organisms can get to the foods. Canning is easy, when you understand the theory behind it. But to be a successful canner, you need to be as careful and precise in your work as a trained nurse when she's sterilizing the surgeon's rubber gloves after an operation. She is just another one outwitting dangerous bacteria.

Taking the lead from these letters you're writing to the Bureau of Home Economics, I've made out a few do's and don'ts on canning. If I don't hit on your particular trouble, write to us. We're only too glad to help.

Point 1. Use only fresh sound fruits and vegetables for canning. If a tomato has a bad spot, throw away the whole tomato. Even though you cut out the bad spot, the part that looks good may be filled with the troublesome bacteria, and you run the risk of infecting the whole lot. We know of a community cannery where that very thing happened. Someone in her zeal to be thrifty spoiled hundreds of jars. So don't try to salvage half spoiled fruits and vegetables by canning. You can't do it and get away with it.

Point 2. If you possibly can, follow the rule "two hours from garden to can." This is especially important with starchy vegetables like corn, peas, and lima beans. If they stand overnight and the weather is warm they may start to develop a kind of spoilage called flat sour. Also the longer these vegetables stand, the more sweetness they lose because the sugar changes to starch. So don't pick your vegetables one day and can them the next, if you can possibly avoid it.

Point 3. Be sure you have jars or cans that you can seal airtight. Per-

haps you think I'm foolish to even mention this. But we have a letter from a mid-western city where they're running a big community cannery. Somebody gave them thousands of mayonnaise jars with the kind of covers that go with such jars. They canned apples and tomatoes in those jars and they spoiled simply because the jars weren't sealed airtight. For marmalade or pickles, those jars would have been all right. And when you're using rubber rings, be sure they are good rubber rings, strong and elastic.

Point 4. Divide your fruits and vegetables into lots which you can handle conveniently at one time with the equipment you have. In other words, don't pack more jars than the canner will hold and then let them stand before processing. That's an invitation to the bacteria to get busy. They like nothing better than nice warm moist surroundings. It speeds up their growth tremendously. You'll be far safer to carry your canning straight through in small batches. And this brings me to

Point 5. Be sure you make a record of each batch, how long you processed it, the day you canned it, and all such points. Then if something goes wrong you can probably put your finger on the reason. In a community cannery, have a responsible timekeeper who does nothing but watch the processing. And be sure she follows a reliable time table. In processing fruits and tomatoes in the boiling water bath, you start counting time when the water boils up vigorously around the jars. Not a minute before. With the pressure canner, you don't count time until the pressure gauge registers 10 pounds or whatever pressure your directions call for.

Point 6, and perhaps the most important of all. Process all non-acid vegetables, that is corn, beans, peas, practically all except tomatoes, in the steam pressure canner. The bacteria in these vegetables are regular die hards. They can even withstand boiling for quite a while. So don't try to can these non-acid vegetables unless you can process them under steam pressure at a temperature higher than the boiling water can give.

These six points after all are just a few of the many to watch for in canning. If you want help on canning or making pickles or jellies or preserves we have directions and we'll be glad to send them to you. And if the relief organization in your community is running a sewing room we can perhaps give you some suggestions for that also. And we still have low-cost food budgets for the use of relief organizations or anyone who wants to know how to get the most food value from a limited amount of money. Just write me at the Bureau of Home Economics here in Washington.

Good-bye for this time.